

# HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 642

By Casada

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Thelma Battle for  
meritorious service to the citizens of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those citizens who, through their extraordinary efforts, have distinguished themselves as community leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such estimable person is Williamson County historian Thelma Battle, who has chronicled and sought to preserve the history of African-Americans in Williamson County; and

WHEREAS, born in a house off Wikle Road in Brentwood, Thelma Battle graduated from Natchez High School in 1964 and has spent her life in Williamson County; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Battle has been interested in history since she was a child and began her important work of sharing the stories of the families and neighborhoods of Williamson County in the 1970s through a weekly newspaper column she wrote for *The Williamson Leader*; and

WHEREAS, she is perhaps best known in her community for her annual Black History Month photo exhibits at the Williamson County Library, in which she collects personal photos from families, copies them, and uses them to illustrate lives and times past; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Battle has been given access to hundreds of treasured family photographs since beginning her first Black History Month project in 1996; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Battle has self-published several books of family stories, recipes, and photographs and, as co-founder of the African-American Heritage Society, she helped lead the movement to restore the McLemore House in the Hard Bargain/Mount Hope neighborhood and open it as a museum of local history; and

WHEREAS, her vision, leadership, and commitment to the preservation of African-American history led to her co-founding the Natchez Place community resource center; and

WHEREAS, through her committed efforts, Thelma Battle has raised interest in the history of families and homes in Franklin's oldest predominantly black neighborhood, and her diligent work led to the listing of the Natchez historic district on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Battle was also among those advocating for the preservation of one of the few remaining structures in a formerly black neighborhood on First and Second Avenues in Franklin; known as the Green House, the building, which was built by a former slave, would have been torn down to make room for additional Police Department parking; and

WHEREAS, the respect and admiration felt for Thelma Battle extend beyond the Franklin and Williamson County community; due to her determined efforts and stalwart advocacy for the preservation of African-American history, the citizens of our State have been given an invaluable gift, the opportunity to educate themselves and their children on the rich and vital history of African-Americans in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, in honor of her singular contributions to African-American history, County Mayor Rogers Anderson proclaimed May 20, 2007, as "Thelma Battle Day" in Williamson County; the Mayor was joined by the Council for the Written Word along with the Heritage Foundation and the Williamson County Public Library in celebrations marking the occasion; and

WHEREAS, Thelma Battle epitomizes the spirit and commitment that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud Thelma Battle for her meritorious service to the State of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Thelma Battle for her determined efforts and stalwart advocacy for the preservation of African-American history and recognize the many

contributions she has made to her community and this State as an historian and preservationist, and we extend to her our best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.